

**THE
MICRO
WAY
LANI
BLOOMER**



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One night a man in my beginning microwave class told me that standing time was needed to let the "microwaves get out of the food so it would be safe to eat"! This is quite wrong but shows the confusion about standing time in microwave cooking. The answers below to the most common questions about standing time should help clear up some of the

confusion.

What is standing time and why do I have to allow for it?

Standing time means letting the food rest for some time before it is cut up or served. It is needed because microwaves cook from the outside in to the center. (This is contrary to a popular myth that food cooks from the inside out in a microwave!) The outside

edges cook first and very rapidly. Standing time allows the middle of the food to "catch up" with the edges.

While food stands, heat from the edges is conducted in to the middle to finish cooking the center of the food. In large dense food like roasts or turkeys, the microwave never reach the center of the food. The center cooks slowly by heat conduction, just as in your range. In a microwave, the edges cook so quickly, that you have to allow a little extra time for the heat to be conducted in to the center.

How long do I have to let my food stand?

The amount of standing time a food needs depends on its size and density. The larger or denser the food, the longer heat takes to be conducted to the center. Some average standing times are shown in the accompanying chart.

Standing time is most important when you cook food on high power, because the edges are cooked more quickly than the center. But even

at lower cooking speeds, standing time is still called for to let the temperatures even out in food, and for flavors to develop fully.

Why does my food get hard when it stands?

Food that is dry or hard, or that has hard spots on it is overcooked. Food cooked properly in the microwave is juicy and moist. The most important thing to understand about standing time is that food continues to cook while it stands. For this reason, some cookbooks call standing time "carry-over cooking." If you cook your food in the microwave until it is "done" by conventional cooking standards, the food will be overcooked by the time you sit down to eat it.

You need to revise your "doneness" tests for microwave cooking, to allow for this extra countertop cooking. A cake cooked in the microwave has cooked enough when it has risen all over, but still has a damp looking spot about 2" in diameter in the center.

This wet, shiny spot will finish cooking and dry up during standing time. A roast, even if you have cooked it to a well done temperature, may still have red juices coming out of the meat at the start of standing time. If you cook the roast longer before letting it stand, you will have dried out, tough meat.

How can I tell when my food is done?

Cook foods for the shortest time given and let it stand. Then check your food to see if it is done after the standing time. This is particularly important with big items like roasts or turkeys. Microwave cooking times and probe temperatures take into account the cooking that goes on during standing time. Temperatures inside a roast, for instance, will increase 1 or 2 degrees a minute for up to 15 minutes while the roast stands and finishes cooking.

If your food is not done when you check it after the standing time, you can cook it longer then. If you cook it for more than 5 minutes more, let it stand another few minutes. With a little experience, you can soon tell when your food is done. If you're not sure, remember that you can always cook something another minute or two after the standing time, but you can't uncook it!

Where should my food stand, and won't it get cold during standing time?

During standing time your food can remain in the microwave if it's turned off. Or, if you need to cook additional food, let the cooked food stand on your counter covered with a lid, foil or a towel to keep warm. (But don't cover cakes.) Wrap baked potatoes in a small terry towel to keep them piping hot. The towel lets the steam escape so the potatoes aren't soggy. Many people are "nervous" about letting cooked food sit around on their counters. Just remember, food is still cooking during standing time, and won't cool down if it's covered. If food stands longer than necessary, while you cook something else for instance, and does cool down too much, reheat it briefly before serving.

When you have several foods to cook for a meal, cook the food with the longest standing time first. Usually this food has the longest cooking time as well. Cook the food that cools down fastest, or has the shortest standing time last. This way, all the foods are ready to serve at the same time, even though they came out of the microwave at different times.

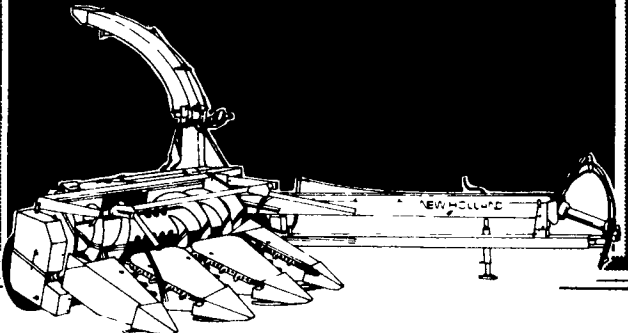
If you are getting dry or hard food from your microwave, it has been overcooked. Cook it less, and let it stand!

FOOD TYPES STANDING TIME

Turkeys, big roasts,	
hams	15 minutes
Casseroles, smaller roasts,	
whole chickens,	
cakes, pies	10 minutes
Vegetables, baked potatoes,	
chicken pieces,	
bar cookies	5 minutes
Scrambled eggs, muffins,	
hamburgers,	
fish fillets	1-2 minutes

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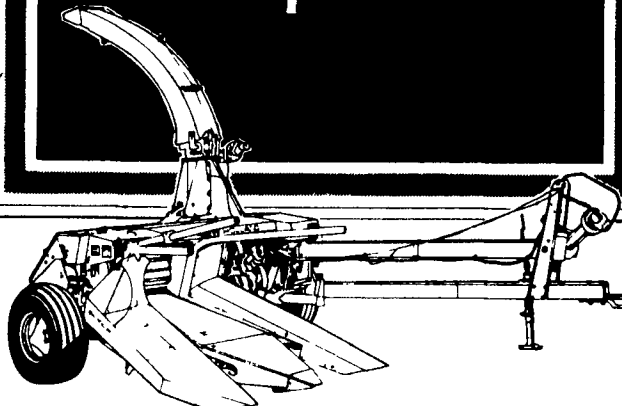
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